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Cuba Post-Mortem: The CIA

The Central Intelligence Agency, directed by Allen W. Dulles, is under critical examination as a result of the Cuban fiasco. A number of unnamed government officials of the highest rank have been issuing the most contradictory statements about what went wrong in Cuba for the past week. When these are questioned by the press the answer is, "Wait until Gen. Taylor's report is in."

The CIA, formed after World War II, is supposed to be the coordinating agency for all intelligence services. Its main function is the gathering of information. One high official has said that it should be divorced from policy in order to function properly. But this same official acknowledged that the CIA has retained some, not all, of the functions of the wartime Office of Strategic Services, which carried out missions, and he also stated that the CIA works with other government agencies in matters with political or military connotations.

This official said that the strength and weaknesses of the Castro regime were correctly analyzed, that there was no miscalculation. But another high official told the press that there were miscalculations by both Cubans and Americans as to the response inside Cuba to an attempt to overthrow Castro and that Castro moved faster than was expected. A third spokesman said, "We were aware of what was proceeding in Cuba."

Confusing as this and other contradictory statements to the press by men of authority are not the main point here. They reveal that the Administration is unable or unready to tell the whole truth. Gen. Taylor's report is supposed to supply this in a few weeks.

But what are we going to find out? We may expect to learn what tactical errors were made, what conditions existed that doomed the adventure from the beginning. But are we going to find out just what the United States did so far as master-minding this operation is concerned? Are we going to find out to what extent the CIA or the Navy or any other U. S. agency planned and directed the whole thing?

The question about the CIA is twofold. "Is it operating efficiently," is one which Congress has been concerned about for some time. The CIA has no supervisor to score its errors, but our international boners of the past few years indicate that either the CIA hasn't been doing a good job or that its product hasn't been used properly. The other question is whether the CIA actually participates in guerrilla activities involving other countries, whether it should, and who decides what these activities will be.

We don't expect the Taylor report to come out with this. We hope the President's appeal for press cooperation on a wartime basis does not involve a moratorium on questions which seek to discover weak spots that must be strengthened at once.

The Cuban experience has suggested to many people that if the CIA is to do more than gather and interpret information, if it is to participate in political or military activities, it must have a check in the form of organized supervision rather than being simply answerable to the White House.

This needs immediate attention, for American involvement in so-called internal wars is a very great question in several parts of the globe and will continue to be. Our intelligence-military network must have its responsibilities and its authority clearly defined. If an overhaul is needed, a certain amount of exposure is necessary to find this out. We cannot afford any more Cuban blunders.

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